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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

25 June 1962

SUBJECT: SNIE 2-2-62: CONSEQUENCES OF A CERTAIN US COURSE OF
ACTION WITH RESPECT TO THE USER

THE PROBLEM

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To estimate the consequences of (a) a successful FIREFLY over-
flight of the Soviet Far East, [] and (b) the
loss of the vehicle over Soviet territory.

DISCUSSION

Consequences of a Successful Flight

1. The USSR would almost certainly be aware of the intrusion
and would realize that it was accomplished by a new and advanced
vehicle. If the flight were successful, we believe that the Soviets
would not publicize it, lest it advertise the shortcomings of their
air defenses. They would, however, move vigorously to improve these

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defenses in the expectation of future penetration attempts. They would also undertake an intelligence collection program aimed at discovering the characteristics of the vehicle and its mode of operation and acquiring advance warning of future flights.

2. Successful flight would have great political meaning to the Soviet leaders. They would make little distinction between this vehicle and the U-2, and they would regard the intrusion as contradicting the President's commitment not to resume U-2 flights. They would conclude that, since the US knew it was reviving an acrimonious issue in Soviet-American relations, the flight demonstrated once again that the US attached such high priority to intelligence activities that it was willing to override political considerations. They would take it as evidence that the US was prepared to accept anew tensions and was indifferent to the effects on negotiations in progress. In particular they would infer that in the Berlin negotiations the US had no interest at this time except to stall.

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Consequences of Loss of the Vehicle Over the USSR

4. Should the Soviets shoot down the vehicle, their subsequent actions would depend in great part on the political circumstances prevailing at the time. If the incident occurred at a time when they were pursuing detente tactics, they might consider refraining from publicity, since exploitation of the affair would commit them generally to a hard line on East-West issues. Even at such a time, however, we think it more likely that they would react by launching a campaign to demonstrate Soviet military prowess, to damage the international position of the US and the prestige of the President to stimulate doubts about the capacity and judgment of the US as leader of the free world and to strain America's relations with its allies.

5. Current Soviet propaganda in fact puts stress on these themes and devotes relatively less attention to the prospects for negotiation and detente. In present circumstances, therefore, we

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think it highly probable that the USSR would give full publicity to a successful shootdown of an intruding vehicle and would base a full-scale political and propaganda attack against the US on this incident. This campaign would follow the general lines of the exploitation of the U-2 affair. The Soviets would almost certainly relate the issue to US programs for military and intelligence use of space, claiming that the intrusion demonstrates the need for international action to halt such programs.

6. If the USSR succeeded in knocking down the vehicle but was unable to produce physical proof of this fact, we think that the Soviets would be somewhat less likely to give publicity to the matter.

Consequences of Soviet Exploitation

7. If the Soviets publicized a FIREFLY failure over their territory, non-Communist reactions would in general be highly adverse; the US would be widely condemned for the subsequent major increase in international tensions. Few elements of Free World opinion would believe that the requirements for reconnaissance justified these consequences. The number of Western statesmen privately expressing approval to the US government would probably be smaller than in May 1960, since some of them would believe that the consequences of the U-2 affair ought to have enjoined the US to greater self-restraint.

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